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Quest for Policy Role

Behind the CIA Row:

Fulbright Committee's Bid for Power

By TED LEWIS

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WASHINGTON.

THE Administration so far has carefully remained aloof from the bitter Senate row over the Foreign Relations Committee effort to horn in on Congressional "watchdog" supervision of the Central Intelligence Agency.

But it is now being appreciated that this move by the committee headed by Sen. J. William Fulbright (D., Ark.) is aimed at getting a foothold in foreign policy-making operations which are basically considered the responsibility of the Executive Branch.

This is, in essence, the issue, despite efforts to gloss it over. The controversial CIA was established in the National Security Act of 1947. Its entire operation is under the specific direction of the National Security Council. Under the law it cannot move into any sensitive foreign policy area, except on direction of the council.

The National Security Council consists of the President, Vice President, Secretary of Defense, Secretary of State and the Director of the Office of Emergency Planning. So at present this council is composed of Mr. Johnson, Hubert Humphrey, Robert McNamara, Dean Rusk and Emergency Planning Director Farris Bryant.

SO, IT should be clear what the Senate Foreign Relations Committee is now attempting is to have inside information on CIA operations which will enable it to influence the making of policy which in turn would shift the responsibility of the Security Council.

Until Fulbright's committee made its bid for representation in the Congressional CIA "watchdog" setup, there had been no threat of legislative intrusion on the policy level. The present watchdog group numbers only selected representatives from the Senate and House Armed Services and Appropriations Committees.

Their primary interest has been in determining whether the CIA needs as much money to operate as it says it does (an estimated \$700 million a year). The secondary interest has been a secret fill-in on world trouble spots—information which provides guidelines for military needs of the armed services.

What the CIA does as the policy tool of the National Security Council has been considered out of the jurisdiction of the Congressional group.



SEN. RUSSELL

The leading force among the "watchdogs" has been Chairman Richard B. Russell (D., Ga.) of the Senate Armed Services Committee. And Russell, for example, recently

disclosed that he has been in the dark concerning specific CIA operations in the high-policy area, including the abortive Cuba invasion plan of April, 1961.

Russell has been leading the fight to prevent a Foreign Relations Committee invasion of the watchdog area. But he has abstained from bringing up the issue of whether Congress has a right to get into the policy act, as it would if the makeup of the watchdog group is broadened as proposed.

RUSSELL has based his case against the Fulbright committee on grounds of security—that there could be dangerous "leaks" if watchdog membership was extended to Foreign Relations Committee members.

This is superficial stuff. The same goes for Senate Democratic Leader Mike Mansfield's effort to keep the Senate from openly debating "a most sensitive subject."

Mansfield says the "most sensitive subject" is the CIA itself, and any public disclosure or charges concerning some of its questionable hush-hush operations would serve no good purpose.

But he well knows, and so does Russell, that the fundamental "sensitive subject" is whether the Foreign Relations Committee should be allowed to dabble in CIA policy. Especially a committee which has begun to "run wild," supplying a sounding board for critics of the Administration Vietnam war policies, and through its Chairman Fulbright has broken with the White House on key issues, such as our intervention in the Dominican Republic.